CLAIMS:

We claim:

1. A side-accessed front piece for a cup dispensing unit, comprising:
   a. a rigid front face comprising a centrally positioned hole through which cups of a desired size may pass;
   b. one or more side walls contiguous with said front face, and extending for a distance backward from said front face;
   c. an access port positioned on one of said one or more side walls; and
   d. one or more generally planar components, comprising voids sized and positioned to permit axial passage of said cups, positioned behind said front face to guide and retain a cup-dispensing insert that is sized to enter laterally said access port, and that comprises elements that retain and dispense cups from said cup dispensing unit.

2. A cup-dispensing insert for use in a side-accessed front piece for a cup dispensing unit, comprising:
   a. a rigid frame comprising a perimeter sized to enter an access port of said side-accessed front piece; and
   b. a cup retaining means to retain and dispense cups from said cup dispensing unit.

3. A cup-dispensing insert for use in a side-accessed front piece for a cup dispensing unit, comprising:
   a. a rigid frame comprising a perimeter sized to enter an access port of the side-accessed front piece of claim 1; and
   b. a cup retaining means to retain and dispense cups from said cup dispensing unit;

   wherein said rigid frame is comprised of two matching pieces of polycarbonate plastic that form a perimeter, wherein said two matching pieces sandwich a flexible silicone gasket material spanning the interior area of said frame and comprising a centrally positioned hole sized to bear against the edges of cups of a desired size, and wherein said two matching pieces and said flexible silicone gasket material are attached together by stitching with nylon thread.

4. A side-accessed cup-dispensing assembly, comprising:
    a. a side-accessed front piece for a cup dispensing unit, comprising:
        1. a rigid front face comprising a centrally positioned hole through which cups of a desired size may pass;
        2. one or more side walls contiguous with said front face, and extending for a distance backward from said front face;
        3. an access port positioned on one of said one or more side walls; and
        4. one or more generally planar components, comprising voids sized and positioned to permit axial passage of said cups, positioned behind said front face to guide and retain a cup-dispensing insert that is sized to enter laterally said access port, and that comprises cup retaining means to retain and dispense cups from said cup dispensing unit;
    b. a cup-dispensing insert for use in a side-accessed front piece for a cup dispensing unit, comprising:
        1. a rigid frame comprising a perimeter sized to enter an access port of said side-accessed front piece; and
        2. a flexible material spanning the interior area of said frame, and comprising a centrally positioned hole sized to bear against the edges of cups of a desired size.

5. A cup dispenser for sequentially dispensing cups from a stacked column of cups, comprising:
    a. a cup housing having a back end and a front end, having a cross-section of sufficient size to contain said stacked column of cups, having a length adapted to a desired dispensing area and a desired quantity of cups retainable in said cup housing; and having a means to provide a cup-advancing force, the front end having a hole through which cups of a desired size may pass;
    b. a linear access port along the side of said body at said front end; and
    c. a cup-dispensing insert sized to insert and be retained in said linear access port, and comprising:
        1. a frame forming four sides, where two opposing sides of the four sides are sized to enter the access port, and where the frame contains a flexible gasket;

    2. said flexible gasket, comprising a hole sufficiently sized to retain and dispense a desired size of cups that are held in stacked fashion within said cup housing.

6. A means for dispensing cups from a cup housing that houses stacked cups, comprising:
   a. side-accessed front piece for a cup dispensing unit, comprising:
      1. a rigid front face comprising a centrally positioned hole through which cups of a desired size may pass;
      2. one or more side walls contiguous with said front face, and extending for a distance backward from said front face;
      3. an access port positioned on one of said one or more side walls; and
      4. a means to receive and to retain a cup-dispensing insert that is sized to enter laterally said access port; and
   b. said cup-dispensing insert that comprises a cup retaining means to retain and to dispense cups.

7. The means for dispensing cups of claim 6, additionally comprising a means for attaching said side-accessed front piece to said cup housing.

8. A means for dispensing cups from a cup housing that houses stacked cups, comprising:
   a. side-accessed front piece for a cup dispensing unit, comprising:
   1. a rigid front face comprising a centrally positioned hole through which cups of a desired size may pass;
   2. one or more side walls contiguous with said front face, and extending for a distance backward from said front face;
   3. an access port positioned on one of said one or more side walls; and
   4. a means to receive and to retain a cup-dispensing insert that is sized to enter laterally said access port; and
   b. said cup-dispensing insert that comprises a cup retaining means to retain and to dispense cups;

wherein said cup retaining means comprises a flexible silicone gasket material sandwiched and sewn between two polycarbonate plastic frames, and comprises a centrally positioned hole sized to provide cup retaining force on cups of a desired size, said cup retaining force balanced against the cup advancing force of a helical spring positioned within said cup housing.